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ABSTRACT

This report describes challenges, opportunities, and pitfalls that exist when attempting to replicate successful youth programs, focusing on the replication of a program originally developed by the Children's Village, Dobbs Ferry, New York. The program was designed to motivate youth in the child welfare system's residential treatment program to stay in school and develop and practice sound work ethics after discharge from care. The program, "Work Appreciation for Youth," was implemented by four community-based organizations with out-of-school youth living in their own communities. Examination of the replication process suggests a number of key issues for consideration by administrators and practitioners of replication sites, sponsoring agencies, and funders. Findings highlight the fact that identifying successful program models and promoting replications is only part of the challenge. Successful replications require careful consideration of several key issues by the replicating site, sponsoring agency, and funding agency (e.g., establishing a mutually agreed-upon quality control mechanism for replication sites before starting; ensuring broad, high-level organizational commitment to the program; developing an implementation manual; making sure programs are large enough; allowing for extended startup time; and facilitating ongoing funding). (SM)

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Lessons Learned:

What the WAY Program Can Teach Us About Program Replication

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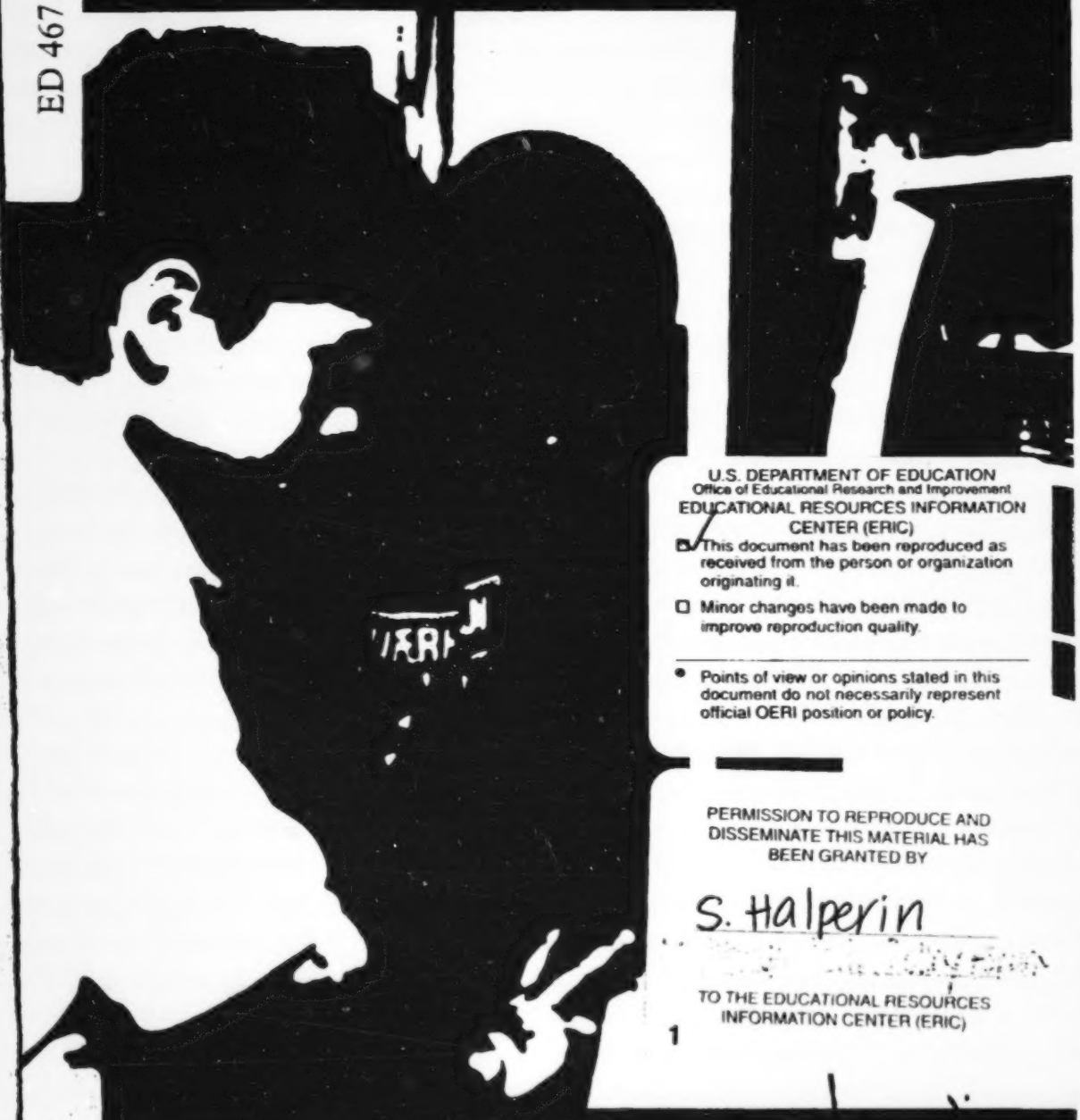

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ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

The American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) is a non-profit professional development organization based in Washington, DC. AYPF provides nonpartisan learning opportunities for individuals working on youth policy issues at the national, state and local levels. Participants in our learning activities include Congressional staff, policymakers and Executive Branch aides; officers of professional and national associations; Washington-based state office staff; researchers and evaluators; education and public affairs media.

Our goal is to enable policymakers and their aides to be more effective in their professional duties and of greater service—to Congress, the Administration, state legislatures, governors and national organizations—in the development, enactment, and implementation of sound policies affecting our nation's young people. We believe that knowing more about youth issues—both intellectually and experientially—will help our participants formulate better policies and do their jobs more effectively. AYPF does not lobby or take positions on pending legislation. Rather, we work to develop better communication, greater understanding and enhanced trust among these professionals, and to create a climate that will result in constructive action. Each year AYPF conducts 40 to 45 learning events (forums, discussion groups and study tours) and develops policy reports disseminated nationally. For more information about these activities and other publications, see our web site at www.aypf.org.

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Lessons Learned:

What the WAY Program Can Teach Us About Program Replication

Nan Dale
Amy J.L. Baker
David Racine

foreword by Tom Smith

American Youth Policy Forum

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Nan Dale has been the President and Chief Executive Officer of The Children's Village since 1981. During that time, she has led the Village to become a multi-service agency, nationally recognized for excellence, program innovation, and for its emphasis on research evaluation. Ms. Dale has long been recognized as a leader in the field, from the time she received the Inter-Association Child Care Association award for Outstanding Youth Care Worker to receiving the United Way Award for Excellence in Management. Under her leadership, the Child Welfare League of America singled out the Village for commendation for its work in Cultural Competence and in Advocacy. Ms. Dale has also pursued international interests, including a leave of absence in 1993-94 to work in Croatia and Bosnia to train local personnel to work with adolescents traumatized by the war. In 1999, she was part of a small delegation of experts who went to Iraq to evaluate the effect of sanctions on women and children in the region, on behalf of the American Friends Service Committee. Ms. Dale has written extensively on child welfare, conflict management, youth employment, independent living and international issues.

Amy J.L. Baker is the Director of the Center for Child Welfare Research of the Children's Village Institute. She has completed a fifteen-year study of a youth-employment program, a four-year $1.4 million project for the U.S. Department of Labor, and several other externally-funded research endeavors. She implemented a statewide survey of aftercare in New York residential treatment programs, a survey of Administration for Children's Services-contracted agencies regarding the extent and impact of problematic sexualized behaviors in the child welfare system, as well as a multi-agency research collaboration on juvenile sex offenders. She is a member of the Child Welfare League of America's National Research Council as well as several city and state committees concerning child welfare research practice. Prior to assuming the directorship at Children's Village, she was the Director of the National Council of Jewish Women's Center for the Child, a New York City-based applied research institute. In that capacity she oversaw national research projects on an early intervention program, Head Start, the transition from welfare to work, and parent involvement in their children's education. She has a doctorate in developmental psychology from Teachers College of Columbia University and is the author or co-author of one book and over 20 articles.

David Racine currently serves as president of Replication & Program Strategies (RPS) in Philadelphia. RPS is a national organization that identifies promising social, health, and education programs and then helps them gain broader adoption. Racine comes to this role with more than two decades of experience designing and implementing social policies through the intergovernmental system and nonprofit sector. Racine's work throughout his career has focused on the application of knowledge to social problems, with a special emphasis on the organizational, political, cultural, and economic contexts within which innovative programs and practices are implemented. Racine helped to design and set up the Points of Light Foundation in Washington, DC, serving as that organization's initial chief operating officer and executive vice president. Prior to that, he was a policy advisor to New Jersey Governor Tom Kean and Missouri Senator Jack Danforth. For several years at the American Public Welfare Association (now American Public Human Services Association), Racine served as the chief Washington representative of the nation's state and local human service agencies. Racine holds bachelors and masters degrees from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana.

Thomas J. Smith, Social Policy Consultant, has more than two decades of experience in planning, directing and evaluating human service programs, especially service programs and initiatives for low-income youth. Smith has designed and managed two national demonstration research projects that testesd innovative combinations of education and training activities for youth, and previously managed a sixteen-city study of federally funded private industry councils. He also directed a three-year foundation-funded study of the implementation of the federal AmeriCorps program, and has written extensively about youth program effectiveness, measurement, and replication.

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This paper provides insights about the replication of a successful program originally developed by The Children's Village (CV), Dobbs Ferry, NY. The program was designed for youth in the child welfare system's most restrictive level of care—residential treatment—to assist and motivate them to stay in school and to develop and practice sound work ethics after they are discharged from care. The program, "Work Appreciation for Youth" (WAY), was found to be successful for this population of youth and was included in a report of approximately 50 evaluations described in the American Youth Policy Forum's (AYPF) 1999 publication, *MORE Things That DO Make A Difference for Youth: A Compendium of Evaluations of Youth Programs and Practices.* (This was the second of a series of AYPF compendia dedicated to informing policymakers and practitioners about "what works" to improve life prospects for youth.)

Among the strategies that consistently surfaced across the over 100 programs cited in AYPF compendia series was the importance of implementation quality. The review of the evaluations of successful programs found:

> Factors contributing to successful implementation are: ample start-up time; clear communication of goals; sufficient, timely and sustained resources; strong leadership from the federal, state or local levels; staff development; and use of data to improve performance. When evaluations show negative results, it is not always due to flaws in elements of the model, but rather to flaws of implementation. (1999, p. xi)

When Nan Dale, Amy Baker and David Racine recorded their reflections on the replication of the WAY model, the American Youth Policy Forum thought it important to share their thinking with the field of youth-serving practitioners, researchers, evaluators and funders. Having captured many of the basic principles of effective youth programs in the original WAY model (such as the availability of caring, knowledgeable adults, high standards and expectations, holistic approaches to the needs of youth, work-based learning, and long-term

services/support and follow-up*), we also thought it important for others to know how these strategies played out in the implementation of the replications at four sites. Hence, the genesis of this joint endeavor by The Children's Village and the American Youth Policy Forum.

A case study of this replication effort, however, should not be seen in isolation. There have been numerous replications of successful programs, which also have valuable tales to be told. With that in mind, we asked social policy analyst Tom Smith to provide a general background and history of replication efforts—both federally- and privately-supported—and the role that they have played in the expansion of youth programs nationwide. In the Foreword to this report, he provides insights into the role that evaluation research has played in increasing or diminishing funding for and replication of successful programs and offers sage counsel about the necessary preconditions for further replication efforts.

AYPF thanks the WAY report authors, Nan Dale, Amy J.L. Baker and David Racine, whose concern rings clear throughout the case study for maintaining high standards of implementation sufficient to transform the lives of vulnerable youth beyond an individual program and into its replication. We are especially grateful that they have taken the time to record their experiences and share them so that others may profit from the lessons learned. We also thank Tom Smith whose vast experience in research and youth program evaluation was used to capture the history, background and conclusions that can be drawn from other replication efforts. In addition to our colleagues at the American Youth Policy Forum who have helped in the editing of this report, we also thank Rafael Chargel, a talented computer graphics artist, who has formatted the document for publication.

Special appreciation also goes to the Ford Foundation whose continued support enables us to carry on an extended conversation and knowledge exchange with policymakers and practitioners working

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* These are many of the basic principles reflected in the current federal Workforce Investment Act for youth employment and training programs.

on youth development issues at the local, state and national levels. This allows the American Youth Policy Forum, through our learning events and policy reports, to:

- document the realities facing at-risk youth, their communities and the institutions and agencies that serve them;
- communicate research findings on effective practices to a very broad audience; and
- highlight issues of policy and practice that must be addressed if our nation is to realize improved outcomes for disadvantaged youth.

— Betsy Brand and Glenda Partee, Co-Directors,
American Youth Policy Forum

Foreword: The Uncertain Enterprise of Replication

For about 30 years, social evaluators have sought to apply the rigorous standards of science, econometrics and statistics to human service programs for adults, adolescents and children. Their success has been considerable. Within the comparatively small community of academic researchers, social policy analysts, congressional and public agency staff who care about such issues, there is pretty fair agreement about what constitutes persuasive evidence of success, and which technical and methodological approaches yield such evidence.

The evidence was to play two key roles. First, and most obviously, it should tell us "what works" with certainty. That in turn would generate support for social programs, persuading the detractors who otherwise would dismiss all such programs as ineffective. Second, the programs that work would be widely adopted; their success, to use that much overused word, would be replicated.

As with all such human enterprise, there have been failures and unexpected consequences. In the late 1970s, for example, the Youth Employment Demonstration Projects Act spent over $700 million in an effort to establish, through systematic research, which programmatic approaches "worked." Much of the research went uncompleted, the quality of other work was later questioned, and most of the programs created under the Act have long since vanished.

Among unintended consequences, perhaps the most dismaying was the discovery of how harsh the effects of evaluation could be. Nothing exemplifies this better than the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) evaluation, completed at the beginning of the 1990s. Using the "gold-standard" methodology of random assignment, it found that youth employment programs had virtually no impact on the wages and earnings of participants.

Specific program types were not identified. The "field" was treated as a monolithic experience, and—as with much evaluation—the

results were broadcast in their most generic and damaging form. As a result, for more than a decade, federal youth employment programs suffered from a crisis of confidence and a gradual loss of funding.

The path of replication has likewise been bumpy. In the early going it was quite naively assumed that replication was a more or less organic, automatic process. The natural "market" for quality programs would work without effort, and the program "winners" would spread on their own.

Three things became apparent.

- Evaluation research was slow and imprecise. It did not always identify clear winners, did not identify them quickly, or did not always identify them with enough detail to make their replication a simple matter.

- The experience of social demonstration projects, whose task was to build program "replicas" in applied settings in order to test them, showed that replication was in fact far from easy or automatic. It took thinking, planning, negotiation, and continuous effort; it also took money.

- The "market" for social programs did not always function efficiently. Some programs that had clearly "worked" failed in the replication phase. The issue of what constituted enough of the "right" evidence to certify a program's effectiveness proved to be a blurry one in the marketplace of social programs. What got replicated too often proved to be not what worked, but rather what was aggressively marketed, or what best fit the current funding emphasis.

The case study that follows, detailing the replication of the Children's Village "Work Appreciation for Youth" program, reflects much of the complexity to be found in both the subject and the reality of program replication. As a case study, it stands well on its own, as do the recommendations proposed by the authors. At the same time, it offers some useful opportunities to recall—and reflect upon—some of the broader history of replication in the youth employment field.

Hard Times

Such reflection is timely, for the youth employment field faces a less than encouraging future. As the nation tightens its belt in the wake of the priorities emanating from the Sept 11 terrorist attacks, federal supports to the youth employment field appear jeopardized and there will likely be serious undermining of the Youth Opportunity Grants program—the signature youth component of the Workforce Investment Act. After all, youth don't vote, education is where the money will be spent (though not extravagantly there, either), and many of these youth programs "don't work" anyway.

Yet mixed in with the proposed cuts lies something of a surprise. The Job Corps, the oldest and most costly of all federal youth employment enterprises, is slated for a small increase, as it is viewed as one of the few cost-effective programs.

The Job Corps is an exception among youth programs. It has compiled a track record strong enough to persuade even a skeptical Congress (and various skeptical presidential Administrations) to keep it intact. Its impact data and cost-benefit figures are impressive. And with over 120 centers operating across the United States, Job Corps must also be judged a genuine replication success. Indeed, the successful operation of so many programs clearly has its role in convincing the skeptics that Job Corps is a program that works not just on paper but in the field as well.

Undoubtedly, replication successes on the order of Job Corps would do much to raise confidence and support for the youth employment field in general. And a sympathetic look across that field would identify potential exemplars, such as youth service and conversation corps, Jobs for Youth and YouthBUILD. Like Job Corps, these programs have "replicated" with some measure of success.

Admittedly too, we can find programs, apparently replication-worthy, that have failed to clear the hurdle. That history reminds us that there is still much to learn, and that some of our casual assumptions about replication need to be revisited. Three examples illustrate some of the key dimensions of the replication experience.

Replication 1: The Job Corps

Since the Job Corps is plausibly a standard by which to judge replication, it is instructive to examine the list of Job Corps' programmatic components. It is impressive, and—in thick, compendious operational manuals—impressively detailed:

- Support for a one-year residential slot in a fully staffed facility
- Life skills, counseling and other ongoing support services
- Fully developed remedial curricula in basic subjects, usually computer-based
- Occupational training in a wide array of industry areas, determined by the labor market of the individual site
- Community service activities, including part-time employment
- A highly developed accountability system that spans both cost and program outcomes.

Each Job Corps site can draw on the support and experience of a national network. That network, in turn, is supported and managed by a national office that systematically sets and reviews performance standards and monitors their attainment by the local programs. One cannot fail to be impressed by the system, even recalling that Job Corps has had more than 30 years in which to work out the kinks.

What has permitted the evolution of this sophisticated program and its supportive infrastructure is robust evidence of success—essential to the survival and growth of a program whose per-slot costs now range near $30,000 per year. What may have mattered more is that, befitting a program birthed and raised by a public agency, the key elements of Job Corps were, routinized and documented relatively early in the game—bureaucratized, in a positive sense.

Job Corps, indeed, began its life as a program-in-replica. Unlike many youth programs, which came into being more by evolution and improvisation than by design and planning, and which depended heavily

on unique local circumstances for design and operation, Job Corps began as a "designed" set of elements, was intended for implementation in numerous settings, and always had behind it the substantial staff and funding resources of a large federal agency.[1]

Replication 2: The Center for Employment and Training

The replication history of the Center for Employment and Training (CET) in San Jose, California is far more typical of a replication effort supported by the federal government as a funder, and not as the direct owner or manager of the initiative.

CET grew up in San Jose over a period of more than 20 years. Though it combined the classic job training components—skills training, education, personal support—CET was distinctive in three ways. First, it stressed consumer choice. Participants were encouraged to identify career pathways they wanted to pursue, so that their motivation to attend work and training would be high.

Second, CET operated on the basis of "work first" as much as possible. Rather than starting with a potentially frustrating educational regimen, CET participants would often be placed directly in paying jobs, or immediately into a skills training environment. This was meant to enhance client motivation: participants came to the program wanting to work, and they got to work as quickly as possible.

Most importantly, CET developed rich and robust ties to the local labor market. Over a twenty-year period, it grew into a labor market intermediary trusted by employers to provide dedicated employees who, if not workplace ready, were motivated to work and learn. And much of the trust was personal, resting on the relationship CET's director had with individual business leaders.

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[1] Editor's note: Aside from matters of effective program design and implementation, Job Corps is supported by clearly the most powerful political network enjoyed by any youth program. Over the past 37 years, private profit-making firms have marshaled the clout of the business community on behalf of the national Job Corps program. Locally, pumping a total of a billion dollars annually into numerous Congressional districts, Job Corps has become a favorite

A privately-funded random assignment evaluation found that CET did indeed work: it had statistically detectable effects on employment and earnings. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) became interested, and funded a six-city replication of the CET program. Unlike the relationship to Job Corps, however, DOL took a hands-off posture regarding this replication. It fell to CET—with no experience as program replicator—to design and implement a strategy.[2]

The major features of CET were replicated in several of the cities. Yet the effort has by and large not been viewed as a success for two reasons—really one reason, with two related dimensions. While many of CET's program elements could be reproduced relatively easily, the "workplace intermediary" function, which was central to the model's success, could not. Simple in concept, it nonetheless was a highly idiosyncratic part of CET in San Jose. Elsewhere the labor markets, the personalities and the relationships were different, or did not exist.

Over time, this challenge might have been met. But as with many federally-funded projects, time was a scarce resource. The expectation, however unrealistic, was that the CET replicas would, in relatively short order, produce results comparable to the original. When that failed to happen within the lifetime of the DOL support grant, the initiative was judged unsuccessful.

Replication 3: The Quantum Opportunities Program

Begun as a foundation-funded demonstration in the early 1990s, the Quantum Opportunities Program (QOP) was designed to test whether intensive and continuing supports for young people in poor families (all had parents on welfare) could enhance social and educational outcomes.

The two main components of QOP were supplemental instructional

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government program not only of governors, mayors and county commissioners, but also of tradesmen and vendors of every description. In some communities, Job Corps is now the largest single employer.

[2] Part of the CET replication effort also was conducted in tandem with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC).

programs, heavy in reading, math and social sciences, in which youth participated year-round from 9th through 12th grade, and ongoing counseling and adult support. The motto, "Once in QOP, always in QOP," captured well the intended spirit of this support. Adult counselors were required to stay with QOP participants, even if they moved or changed schools. Indeed, in the model's design, counselors received incentive payments for the academic accomplishments of their counselees (as did the students themselves).

A random assignment evaluation, despite having strikingly small sample sizes, nonetheless found positive results after four years on a number of factors: reduced school dropout rates, increased college enrollments, and reductions in criminal behavior. At roughly $10,000 per participant over four years, the program's costs were fairly moderate.

Still, the full-scale version of QOP has never been replicated. (Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America did, however, operate a much-scaled-down version.) There appear to be three reasons. First, the actual operation of the program was quite thinly documented. Though there was ample anecdotal evidence about the dedication and persistence of QOP counselors in keeping in touch with youngsters, little information was compiled about factors such as actual frequency of contact, content of interactions, and the connection between counseling and education.

Similarly, the role of financial incentives in producing program effects could not be isolated. It was generally clear that both staff and students had received incentive payments throughout the program, but the research conducted on the program could shed no light on how or whether those incentive payments were themselves a factor in producing impacts, or contributed to the effectiveness of the counseling contacts or the educational program.

Finally, the novelty of the program model itself worked against replication. The QOP demonstration was fully funded from the outset, so that out-year support was never an issue. It worked fairly intensively with a small, well-identified number of youth over a sustained period of time. To bring those model elements to any scale in a normal agency setting, characterized by annual funding cycles, little ability to

concentrate resources on limited numbers, and high client mobility would have been challenge enough. In light of the relatively scanty documentation about the innards of the QOP model, that challenge remains unaddressed.

Drawing Conclusions: Four Replication Tenets

These examples underscore the fragility of the replication enterprise, at least in the absence of a persistent and well-heeled sponsor, i.e. the federal government's 37-year support of the Job Corps. Certainly they suggest, as other replication efforts confirm, that replication is neither an automatic nor simple process. From the successful examples, and from some of the unsuccessful ones the field has witnessed, we can derive some basic notions about the preconditions of a successful replication effort.

1. Definition

Replication must begin with a program model that has both clarity and coherence. Clarity means simply that the elements of the program can be specified with sufficient detail to permit reproduction. This is not always easy to accomplish.

In the case of an education-based program, there may be a fully tested and developed curriculum, supported by teaching manuals, training materials and staff requirements. With those tools, the potential replicator of the educational experience has a relatively straightforward task. Properly qualified staff can be trained to teach the curriculum, with plausible expectations of success.

In many youth programs, though, "education" or "basic skills instruction" are more generic components, much less defined or tested; so too are such components as "counseling," however critical they may be to the program's putative success. Precisely what needs to be reproduced, with what attributes, in what quantities?

Model coherence focuses on the reasons for the intervention: what is the rationale for believing these programmatic elements will bring about particular results? Social scientists refer to the hypothesis underlying a program model as the "theory of change." Whether the program is

consciously created with such a theory in mind, or whether, as often happens, program elements are pulled together in evolutionary fashion, there is usually a theory, however conscious or not, at work.

In the WAY program, for example, there was a more or less explicit theory: extended, intensive, supported exposure to work and the workplace would help young people achieve employment success and self-sufficiency. Intensive counseling, workplace preparation and work experience were the "program pieces" used to implement the program's theory of change.

2. Evidence of Effectiveness

In an era where resources for human services are scarce, the stakes have been raised significantly for programs. Often simply to survive, they must produce evidence that what they do makes a difference.

As a prerequisite to replication, solid evidence is important in several ways. One, it provides the basic rationale for proceeding with a replication initiative in the first place. The expense and effort of replication both are considerable. While positive findings do not guarantee a program's expansion, their absence all but rules it out.

But program evidence can do more. First, it can guide replicators in thinking through replication strategy, especially if the program has generated a reasonably comprehensive set of measures. Intermediate outcome measures, regarding, for example, program retention and attendance, educational and other test scores can help determine which program features are most critical, most readily accepted, most contributory to ultimate program effects. By helping to validate elements of the "theory of change," they suggest which parts of the program need to be reproduced with the greatest amount of fidelity.

A key replication issue is—and will likely continue to be—that comparatively few programs are able to generate completely definitive evidence of success in their formative stages. The expense and technical difficulties involved in random assignment evaluation, the method that produces arguably the most persuasive kind of evidence, are considerable, and limit such research to a handful of highly promising models.

Far more typical is the case of a program, like WAY, whose replication was based on "strong preliminary outcome data." That increases the uncertainty and risk. It also suggests that besides striving to produce persuasive impact evidence, programs also need extensive and well-collected in-program data. A program with clear recruitment criteria, solid attendance, reliable information about actual services provided, good retention and outcome data will be a far more attractive candidate for replication. And that information will provide guidance in devising the strategies and standards to be used in the replication.

3. Standards of Fidelity

Besides having a well-formulated model, successful replication depends on rules that determine when an acceptable program replica has been achieved. Second-chance youth programs, which often involve a mix of well-defined and less formal elements, particularly need to have clear benchmarks to establish the fidelity and completeness of replication.

Of special relevance are programs that promote "youth development." The term is one that has been widely adopted and used in the past decade. Yet its precise meaning, in the context of individual programs, may be difficult to pin down. Is it a set of specific practices or activities? A concrete theme of counseling or life-skills instruction? Or a more informal attitude and set of supports, worked into a program setting through informal mentoring or (as in the case of Youth Opportunity Centers) a welcoming physical environment?

As the authors of the WAY study stress, it is critical to develop detailed materials—they recommend an implementation manual—that can assist local replicators in putting the program into place in the intended manner. Having explicit directives for reproducing the program, and ensuring (through training and orientation) that they are accepted, understood and followed, is a critical replication step, often understressed by replicators. The authors are correct as well in viewing use of these materials as one part of a larger emphasis on ensuring that the program replicas are of equal quality to the original.

An added dimension of fidelity is determining whether all elements of a program can be readily implemented in new settings, implemented with

difficulty (and how much difficulty), or whether some cannot be implemented at all—or replicated only with considerable expenditures of resources and time (the CET example). In general the novel aspects of a program deserve extra scrutiny, particularly if they are determined to be crucial to success. In WAY, for instance, the multiple roles of the counselor meant that selecting talented and skilled professionals for that role would be a critical part of the replication process.

4. Resource Adequacy

As the foregoing makes clear, replication is a process that from the outset makes considerable demands on the organization that attempts it. The technical analysis and planning required to devise a workable strategy draws resources. The implementation, monitoring and quality control needed to ensure transplantation of the original likewise requires sustained and adequate funding.

Adequate funding for replication is not easy to find. The WAY history underscores this point: its replicators sought multi-year funding, and had to negotiate to get funding for more than one year. That funding evidently was insufficient to overcome some of the start-up problems to which replication is susceptible. Staff turnover, and the concomitant need for speedy retraining of replacements affected at least one of the WAY programs. More ample funding undoubtedly would have helped to address these issues more energetically. The larger reality, though, is that funding and support for replication is not likely to be plentiful.

We need to recognize that "windows of opportunity" for expanding promising and proven programs will open infrequently and briefly. The WAY experience can teach us much. It also should provide encouragement and guidance. As a field we need to be alert to strong and well-designed programs that generate evidence of their effectiveness. And when the opportunities to transplant them arise, we need to use what we have learned thus far about replication to make our efforts more effective, and to increase the chances that the replicas will perform as successfully as the originals.

Tom Smith
Social Policy Analyst

Introduction

This paper addresses the issue of program replication based on the experience of replicating the Work Appreciation for Youth (WAY) program in four urban community-based organizations, with support from the United States Department of Labor/Employment and Training Division. WAY was originally developed by The Children's Village (CV) for youth in the child welfare system's most restrictive level of care—residential treatment—to assist and motivate them to stay in school and to develop and practice work ethics after they had been discharged from care. For this population, the program was found to be successful. The replications were adaptations of the WAY program model modified to fit the four separate community-based, youth-development organizations chosen to implement WAY with out-of-school youth living at home. An examination of the replication process suggests a number of recommendations for realizing successful program replications (of WAY or of other similar programs). The recommendations are designed to inform administrators and practitioners of replication sites, sponsoring agencies and funders.

This paper describes the WAY program, evaluation findings, and CV's experience with replication. In doing so, the paper addresses an understudied area of program evaluation of importance to policymakers, program developers and researchers.

Background

In 1984, the Children's Village (CV), one of the nation's oldest and largest child welfare agencies, created and launched a five-level program designed to inspire youth to stay in school, develop work ethics, and plan for their future. The program was designed to serve an especially high-risk population—the seriously troubled subset of New York's foster care system in residence at The Children's Village Residential Treatment Center (RTC). Because of the extreme neediness of this population, CV developed the Work Appreciation for Youth (WAY) program, conceiving it as a long-term intervention with the goal of helping those youth make a successful transition into adulthood. Thus, while the WAY program started while youth were in the RTC residence, its most intensive and unique component was a *five-year aftercare* program. Taking such a long-term approach was and still is at odds with the emphasis of most youth development and youth employment programs that offer short-term services and have commensurately short-term outcome expectations. In contrast, WAY began with the premise that youth in RTCs had experienced such profound deprivation that they lacked the fundamental skills necessary to become productive adults without years of carefully sequenced skill development and long-term support from a caring adult.

With this thinking in mind, CV raised funds from private donors to develop the program and has been operating WAY for almost two decades. In brief, WAY is a youth employment, dropout prevention, aftercare program that aims to help youth stay in school, get and keep a job, and to create a positive future for themselves. In the child welfare system, the program is identified as an Independent Living (IL) program and derives support for the in-care component from that funding stream.[1]

Ten years after the program began, on the strength of strong preliminary outcome data, CV was awarded a four-year, $1.4 million

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[1] In New York City, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) draws funding from several sources (including federal Health and Human Services Title IV funds) to contract with agencies to provide IL services.

grant from the U.S. Department of Labor (in response to a request for proposals) to replicate a modified version of the program in four community-based organizations (CBOs) serving out-of-school youth. The RFP had called for a one-year program, but CV argued for a longer-term initiative. Although CV would have liked a four-to-five-year grant, it asked for and was awarded a four-year grant.

At the time the grant was awarded, CV had over a decade of experience running the WAY program, but no practical knowledge about translating the program into a community-based model and little knowledge of program replication per se. In preparing for replication, staff found a dearth of information in the literature regarding how best to proceed. Issues of fidelity of program implementation and replication strategies had received scant attention, especially as they related to youth development and youth employment programs. This omission was due in part to the fact that many programs have been evaluated in their "first-generation" incarnation rather than in subsequent replication phases.
Issues of implementation and replication emerge most clearly as programs are replicated outside of the "home" agency. In addition, most evaluation researchers have been funded to determine program effectiveness, not to identify factors that might mediate or problems that might arise once a program has been replicated on a wider scale. This is unfortunate because, as the Department of Labor noted (1995), programs that create long-term benefits for disadvantaged youth must be extremely well implemented. Nonetheless, what happens to successful youth employment programs once they are replicated remained relatively unknown.

Despite the lack of guidance, replicating WAY in the four very different sites proceeded as planned and produced interesting and mixed results. Two of the four sites were successful replications, one closed, and one was merged with a higher functioning site. Needless to say, this was not the goal. It was expected, perhaps naively, that there would be four successful replications. But, this outcome created unintended lessons in program replication that were derived by examination of why some sites had successful replications and others did not.

CV is not the only child welfare agency that will be called upon to replicate its program, unaware of the many thorny organizational and programmatic issues involved in such an enterprise. In this paper, we try to bring to the field some of the hard-earned knowledge so that the next generation of program replicators can benefit from CV's experience. It is important to bear in mind that these lessons have been culled after-the-fact from four years of experience. No formal implementation or replication study was part of the grant award. It was only in the midst of implementation of four separate replications that it was realized that replication itself is an art form. Thus, knowledge was acquired along the way, by trial and error.

Since that time, WAY has been replicated at five additional sites (both residential/aftercare and the CBO models). The lessons learned in the U.S. Department of Labor sites are the main subject of this paper and have been applied to subsequent replications. This has served to refine our thinking about these issues and to influence our reflections on the original replications. These lessons are offered as a starting point of discussion for future endeavors, not as truths to be accepted without question.

The WAY Model at Children's Village

CV operates an array of programs—from community-based preventive services to a Residential Treatment Center (RTC) for some of the most troubled boys[2] in the New York City child welfare system. In New York City, RTCs serve a subset of the foster care youth (roughly four percent of the total number of children in out-of-home care are deemed too disturbed to be cared for in a foster home or any less restrictive setting). It was for this exceptionally high-risk population that CV initially developed the WAY program with both in-care and long-term aftercare components.

A full description of the WAY program model as well as results of a 15-year longitudinal study of the program for CV youth can be found elsewhere (Baker, Olson, & Mincer, 2000). Below is an overview of the WAY design and rationale and the results of the longitudinal evaluation (excerpted and adapted from Baker et al. 2000).

The key assumptions underlying the development of WAY were:

1) Employability and the acquisition of basic education skills are linked.
2) The development of work ethics and a work history at a young age will supply youth with skills and attitudes that can help them obtain and maintain employment at an older age.
3) Program components must be individualized and developmentally appropriate and work experiences must be carefully sequenced.
4) Services for youth must be provided in the context of a long-term relationship with a caring adult, and should be comprehensive and follow youth across service systems.
5) Services must be long-term, beginning with youngsters in their early teens and continuing for four to five years, until youth are 18 to 21 years of age.

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[2] The Children's Village serves only boys on its residential treatment center campus.

The full WAY program instituted at CV has five levels, tailored and sequenced for youth while they live in the RTC environment and after they are discharged from care.

- WAY Works, Levels 1 to 4, is the in-treatment component of WAY.

All youth residing on the CV RTC campus participate in Level 1, performing non-paid chores within their cottage (15 youth each live in 21 cottages). Level 2 youth perform small jobs in their cottage or neighborhood for token payment. Level 3 youth work in paid jobs at one of CV's campus employment sites (such as the computer lab, greenhouse, or youth newspaper). These jobs require formal applications and regular performance evaluations. Level 4 youth work at paid jobs off campus, for example, in local hospitals, stores and day care centers.

- WAY Scholarship, Level 5, the highest level, is initiated when youth are about to be discharged from care and continues for up to five years post-discharge.

The goals of the WAY Scholarship program are to help youth solidify the skills and attitudes learned in WAY Works, especially maintaining a positive attitude toward education and work, gaining skills for getting and holding a job, planning for their future, and acquiring a sense of control over their lives. There are five core elements of Level 5: mentoring/counseling, educational advocacy, work experiences, group activities, and financial incentives. The programmatic elements incorporated into the WAY Scholarship program are described below.

Programmatic Elements of the WAY Scholarship Program

- Long-Term, Individualized Counseling/Mentoring to Help WAY Participants Meet Challenges and Solve Problems

The WAY Scholarship program offers at-risk youth an opportunity to participate in an intensive, individualized, long-term counseling/ mentoring relationship. Once enrolled in the WAY Scholarship

program, each scholar is assigned a paid, professional WAY counselor with whom he can develop a relationship that forms the core of the WAY experience. The counselor is the essential ingredient in the delivery of the service, ensuring that youth receive advocacy, information, encouragement, work ethics education, counseling, and other services as needed to succeed in school and on the job. The counselor is also expected to make sure that she or he works closely with family members and community support systems in order to strengthen those connections. The counselor is to provide personal and intensive emotional support and practical guidance at every step of the way in the youth's young adulthood. Counselors are to be coaches, cheerleaders, surrogate parents, advocates, teachers and friends. Most importantly, they aim to "hang in there" with each youth no matter how far off track he strays. In fact, when a youth is getting into the most trouble is exactly the time when the counselor is most needed, conveying the very important message that the counselor will never give up on him. In contrast with the current movement for volunteer mentors (e.g., Mech, Pryde, and Rycraft, 1995), WAY believes in hiring trained, paid professional mentors. Hiring professional staff increases the likelihood that mentors will be able to make a long-term commitment to the youth and ensures a much higher level of accountability to the young people from the agency.

- Educational Advocacy and Tutoring to Facilitate School Success

Youth in residential group foster care have many educational needs and may need non-parental adults to be educational advocates. The WAY Scholarship program was based on the premise that each student needs at least one adult to be highly invested in his or her educational success—to support high expectations, provide concrete assistance, and be an ally in dealing with the educational bureaucracy. The WAY Scholarship counselor plays this essential role. The counselor monitors the youth's educational progress, provides tutoring services if needed, speaks with school guidance counselors when difficulties arise, and assists the youth in selecting appropriate classes, thus essentially shepherding the youth through the secondary (and sometimes postsecondary) educational process. Whenever possible, this role is to be carried out in cooperation with the parent or guardian. WAY Scholarship counselors are also

expected to assist parents in becoming more invested in their adolescent's education and to advocate for the needs of WAY Scholarship participants.

- Work Experiences and Work Ethics Training to Enable Participants to Build Work Histories and a Sense of Themselves as "Workers"

The WAY Scholarship program offers youth experience in actually being employed. This is accomplished initially through work-sites on the CV campus (during the first six months of their participation in WAY Scholarship while they still reside on campus) and in jobs the youth obtain in their community. It is expected that through these early employment experiences, youth develop concrete knowledge of what it means to work, begin to acquire a self-image as "someone who works" (as opposed to someone who hangs out or tries to "get over"), and develop work ethics (showing up for work on time, and being pleasant and agreeable regardless of personal distractions).

WAY Scholarship work experiences are designed to build on the work experiences youth obtained while in WAY Works. For example, Levels 2 and 3 of the WAY program were developed to mimic a "real world" employment situation, with attendant application procedures, work rules, and guidelines for dismissal and promotion to the next level of WAY. Employment supervisors evaluate each youngster's job performance at the campus work-sites, and the WAY Scholarship counselor is in regular contact with each youth as he obtains employment off campus. Job opportunities are sought for youth and referrals are provided for regular work, subsidized work, or internships as part of the progression to regular, independently-secured employment. Expecting youth to "earn" and "deserve" their job promotes self-worth and a sense of purpose based on good performance.

In order to be selected for WAY Scholarship, youth must have already participated in WAY Works employment and workshops. Once in WAY Scholarship, youth work at Level 3 jobs on the campus, Level 4 jobs in the community near CV, and Level 4 jobs in the community to which they are discharged. Youth who work at Level 3 jobs not only must apply for the job (with written and oral

interview components), but also must maintain a high level of employee attendance and competence in order to keep their jobs. Youth are evaluated on a regular basis and receive promotions or demotions based on performance. Youth who receive unfavorable reviews are referred for employment counseling and refresher workshops. In this way, youth are taught skills and behaviors important for adult employment success. Level 3 work-sites on the grounds of the Children's Village include: the computer bus, the newspaper, grounds/maintenance, the Village store, and carpentry woodshop. Some youth also work in various departments on campus, such as food service or the warehouse.

Once teens successfully master Level 3 work, they are eligible to apply for a variety of Level 4 employment positions. Level 4 of the WAY Scholarship program provides youth with opportunities to gain employment experiences off campus, including internships and part-time jobs in various small local businesses or in departments of larger businesses. Youth have to be at least 15 years of age and have satisfactory experience in a Level 3 job. In addition, they must have satisfactory grades, demonstrate positive behavior in their cottage, and be recommended for a Level 4 position by the worksite supervisors and the program coordinator. Examples of Level 4 jobs include: administrative assistant, dietary aide or maintenance assistant at the Dobbs Ferry Hospital; service station attendant, local delicatessen helper; or assistants in small businesses such as a flower shop, nursing home, or print shop. Once discharged from the campus of the Children's Village, all WAY scholars work at jobs in the community in which they are discharged. They are to find their own employment situations with the guidance and support of the WAY Scholarship counselor.

- Group Activities and Workshops to Promote a Positive Peer Culture and Help Youth Develop Life Skills

While on campus, WAY scholars meet regularly with others in the program for group sessions and workshops in work ethics and life skills training. Topics include: job search, career planning, social responsibility, citizen rights, decision-making, and health education. Through discussion, role-playing, videos, exercises, and creative

arts projects, the work ethics curriculum explores such issues as dependability, productivity, ability to accept supervision, and getting along with others. Once discharged from care, those themes become part of the regular counseling relationship between the WAY counselor and the scholar in the real world. A constant process of teaching work and life skills continues for the full five years of the program.

The WAY Scholarship awards and induction dinner is held annually in the ballroom of a New York City hotel and attended by WAY scholars, their families and friends, as well as city officials and celebrities. The dinners celebrate the achievements of WAY scholars and communicate to those youngsters how important their achievements are to their families and to society at large. Graduates of WAY Scholarship and those in their later years of the program speak from the podium to tell the soon-to-be-inductees how important WAY has been to them and then they help induct the new, younger scholars in a ceremony that expresses the idea that those selected are "special" and that they have been chosen for membership in a very important "club." Despite the fact that nearly every youth who is eligible and expresses even the most tentative interest in WAY Scholarship participates in the program, the celebrations (and other activities) were designed to solidify their interest, inspire greater interest, and provide a positive peer culture and a sense of belonging to something special.

- <u>Financial Incentives to Help Youth Plan, Save and Believe in their Futures</u>

WAY Scholarship offers matched savings whereby youth who save receive up to $500 per year in matching funds to be used towards further education or training upon completion of high school. The matched savings program is intended to help youngsters believe that they have a future, and to teach them to set longer term goals, plan for the future and save. WAY Scholarship further supplements these savings by guaranteeing $1,000 for each year of college or up to two years for job training. Non-matched accounts are also made available to youth for personal spending.

As part of their contract to participate in WAY Scholarship, all youth agree to work part-time and to save part of their earnings.

At the time the WAY program was founded on the campus of the Children's Village RTC, funds were obtained to launch a 15-year longitudinal study of the youth in WAY Scholarship (Level 5 of WAY). Data were collected on child and family characteristics at the time youth entered care, amount and type of participation in the WAY program, and key developmental outcomes, including educational achievement at the end of the program and at age 21, adult employment and criminality. WAY youth (all who enrolled in the program as well as the 75 percent who participated in the program for at least 2 ½ years) were compared to a group of boys who met all of the criteria for program enrollment but were discharged from care too soon to participate in WAY. Findings revealed that, in all respects, WAY youth (especially those three-fourths who participated for at least half of the five-year program) had better outcomes than the comparison group of RTC boys who did not participate in WAY. For example, data available at the time that CV responded to the U.S. Department of Labor request for proposals revealed that 90 percent of the WAY Scholarship youth who stayed with the program graduated from high school and 78 percent were employed.

Program Replication

Based on the research findings and growing interest in the WAY Scholarship program, funding from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) was sought and obtained in 1994 for a four-site community-based replication of WAY. The thinking behind the transfer of the program from a residential treatment center to a community-based setting was that although the program services might be somewhat diluted because the youth would not all be residing in the same location, the needs of the youth would also be somewhat less severe because they had not been removed from their families due to abuse/neglect and emotional/behavioral problems. CV felt it was important to determine whether the program would be effective in preventing an identified group of high-risk youth from formally dropping out of school. The targeted population were those youth identified as at extreme risk for school failure: youth between the ages of 14 and 16 who were already characterized as "out-of-school" and who were low income minority youth living in their home communities.

In keeping with the DOL timetable expectations, two weeks after notification of the grant award, CV issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) that spelled out the WAY program model's philosophy, goals and objectives, as well as the program components that were to be offered at each replication site. Candidates for replication were asked to respond within one month demonstrating that (a) their own program philosophy was consistent with the WAY model; (b) they served high-risk youth 14 to 16 years of age; (c) the services they already offered were high quality and had a track record of attracting youth; (d) they had a target group of potential participants in the appropriate age range who were economically disadvantaged school dropouts or near dropouts; and (e) they had the capacity to provide work-readiness work-sites. Selection of replication sites was made with the help of an expert advisory panel. Four agencies in three states were selected to implement WAY in their communities. All four agencies were located in urban, low-income minority communities with high unemployment and criminality rates.

In order to meet the requirements of the RFP, four notable modifications were made in the program model. First, unlike CV, the replication sites were all community-based organizations (CBOs) offering youth development through programs such as remedial educational, peer sex education, teen journalism, youth leadership and mentoring. Second, the target population was different. The Children's Village created the WAY program to serve highly troubled adolescent males who were transitioning from residential treatment, having been removed from their families temporarily or permanently. The WAY program in the replication sites, however, served "out-of-school" youth, male and female,[3] living in the community with their families or other guardians. Third, the structure of the program was modified to meet the shorter time-period of the grant. Rather than several years devoted to Levels 1 to 4 of WAY while youth were in care followed by four to five years of "aftercare" through WAY Scholarship, the program was condensed into a three-year program. It is important to note that CV youth are recruited into WAY while essentially a captive audience at the RTC. The WAY counselor has had an opportunity to develop a relationship with the youth prior to offering aftercare services. WAY counselors in the replication sites had no such advantage.

Replication sites were notified of their acceptance within one month of submission of the proposal and were expected to begin program recruitment immediately based on the timetable outlined by the Department of Labor. Over the course of the next three and a half years, the four program sites replicated the WAY program with varying degrees of success. Throughout the process, CV maintained oversight, provided support and guidance, and monitored program implementation. The approach that CV took in relating to the replication sites was to be prescriptive regarding the goals of the program and the core elements necessary to achieve those goals (i.e., long-term, individualized counseling/mentoring, educational advocacy and tutoring, work experiences and work ethics training, group activities and workshops, and financial incentives), while being flexible about the specific activities and curricula used at each site.

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[3] No modifications in the core elements of the program were deemed necessary when girls were included in the program.

Further, mechanisms were in place to provide ongoing feedback about each site's success in implementing WAY. Strategies for intervening in problems were not defined with specificity in advance and CV was hesitant to take an authoritarian position with agencies considered to be colleagues.

Results of Replication

The degree to which the model was successfully transferred and embedded into each local agency's host environment varied. The most successful replication site integrated WAY effectively into the larger agency. The agency allocated staffing and other resources beyond the grant-funded positions to ensure the success of the program. WAY was situated in a storefront satellite office of the agency in a youth-friendly space. Program staff had relevant program experience and provided participants all the core program elements. Counseling was a vital component because the youth were facing a great deal of family and community difficulties. Staffing was consistent across the three-plus years. The program continues in operation today.

A second CBO agency also offered a strong program, adhering closely to the program model. The location of the program—a community center—also housed recreational and employment services for teens. However, the youth that initially enrolled in the program at this site were at the upper end of the age continuum and had characteristics that placed them among the more extremely at-risk participants. They had serious emotional and personal problems, including teen pregnancy. These teenagers, nonetheless, were progressing, albeit very slowly, due largely to their attachment to their WAY counselor. Unfortunately, the counselor left the agency and had no backup staff to which the young people could transfer their connection. Thus, many of the initial participants dropped out.

Due mostly to this circumstance, a second group of youth were enrolled nearly half way through the program. This group of teens was less severely troubled and was better able to benefit from the program. Meanwhile, a new executive director was hired who had no real attachment to WAY or its youth employment focus. The program operated until the end of the funding cycle and then closed.

The other two replication sites faced several challenges in implementing WAY. At one site, unanticipated organizational problems developed that included severe overall funding decreases and a resultant merger with another agency. Top management was

understandably distracted by these developments and this situation was exacerbated by the fact that the program's WAY counselor was inexperienced and new to the agency. Thus, the counselor and the program were not well connected to needed agency supports and resources. Poor location and inadequate space contributed further to low participation and program ineffectiveness. Eventually, this program site merged with another replication site in the vicinity and many of the youth were maintained in WAY through that alliance.

The fourth replication program was discontinued by The Children's Village due to irreconcilable disagreements about key program implementation issues. This agency was quite large and ran numerous programs related to employment skill development. Despite a robust RFP response, they were unwilling to accept the WAY model whenever a principle of the program clashed with their existing protocols or operations. For example, in the WAY program, youth are required to seek their own jobs with the support and help of the counselor. Youth are expected to travel outside of the immediate neighborhood if job opportunities (and transportation) exist. This expectation, though agreed upon up front, was at odds with the CBO's existing procedure of placing teens in agency-owned and operated employment sites in the neighborhood. Such issues, over time, became obstacles to implementation of the WAY program model and when they proved to be beyond resolution, the site was finally dropped.

The variability in the implementation and quality of the WAY program at the four replication sites served as an ideal natural laboratory for identifying recommendations for future replications of WAY and similar programs. Although some of these recommendations may seem obvious, especially in hindsight, many social service agencies are not in the business of replication and may not have the benefit of previous experience to draw on when making decisions about replication. As was learned, even small decisions can have large effects on the quality and success of youth employment programs.

The following recommendations are divided between those that focus primarily on what the sponsoring agency and replicating agency should know and those that focus primarily on what the funder should know.

Recommendations for Program Replication

Agencies that sponsor program replication should consider the following five recommendations covering the need for (1) a decisive quality control strategy, (2) high-level organizational commitment, (3) an implementation manual, (4) protection against program vulnerability, and (5) a strategy to address a range of complex needs of at-risk adolescents. These are discussed below.

- Establish a Mutually-Agreed Upon Quality Control Mechanism for Replication Sites Before Getting Started

A central issue for any sponsoring agency overseeing the replication of its programs is the level of control to exercise over the replication sites when issues of program fidelity and organizational autonomy arise. CV took steps to ensure fidelity to the WAY model, defining the model clearly, describing the program components with specificity, and providing staff training in the core elements of WAY, regular feedback and supervision and ongoing written reports highlighting strengths and weaknesses. However, a well thought out and clearly articulated model for relating to replication sites when they strayed from the model (either in the elements or the implementation of them) had not been developed. Further, as a service agency, CV was somewhat inhibited in leveling sanctions or intervening in the replication agency's operations and tended to let some things slide in the spirit of partnership and collaboration.

Because it is difficult to institute consequences for replication problems once programs are up and running, procedures should be established from the outset for how such issues will be handled if they arise. These should be clearly articulated in a Letter of Agreement or a similar contractual document and signed off on by both parties. The degree of authority of the sponsoring agency needs to be spelled out before undertaking replication and mechanisms for dealing with program replication infractions need to be clear and agreed upon. Issues such as the following need to be thought through to their conclusion before anyone signs on the dotted line. What aspects of the program, if any, does the sponsoring agency have the final word on and what aspects, if any, does the replication site have decision-making control over? Who hires

staff? What happens if the sponsoring agency believes that a staff member's performance is unacceptable or threatens to undermine the success of the model? Who has the last word about program location, participant selection, and program offerings? To whom does the local program staff report? What program data must be collected? Who oversees and analyzes these data?

- Ensure Broad and High-Level Organizational Commitment to the Program

The four replication agencies varied in senior staff involvement in the program. Successful replication requires genuine "buy-in" of the model and the active involvement of senior staff that are able and willing to anticipate and encourage broad internal agency support so that program staff can leverage other agency resources and personnel if needed. Such organizational commitment is critical when difficult staffing and resource decisions must be made internally.

Before working with an agency in replicating its programs, the sponsoring agency should ensure that there is a good fit both philosophically and organizationally for the program. Key questions to ask are to whom will the program director report? Who will supervise the program director? What kinds of space and materials will the program director be able to access? Which member of the agency executive staff will have ultimate responsibility for program implementation? How will the executive director be kept informed (and how often) and involved in any program issues or concerns that threaten the integrity of the replication? The answer to these and other important questions should be incorporated into the Letter of Agreement.

Prior to accepting an agency as a replication site, the sponsoring agency should ensure that the mission of the agency is consonant with the mission of the program, that the program will be accorded appropriate respect and prestige within the agency, and that there is direct responsibility from the executive director for program integrity.

- Develop an Implementation Manual

In selecting the WAY replication sites, attention was paid to identifying those agencies with expertise in operating many if not all of the core elements of the WAY program. The selection process was relied on to

ensure that the replication sites had experience in programmatic areas central to the WAY program (e.g., tutoring, pre-employment experiences, and work ethics workshops). Thus, it was not deemed necessary to mandate or recommend curricula, or specific materials to use in the work ethics workshops or the tutoring component of the program. However, programs are more than the sum of their elements. Successful programs have developed the principles and curricula required for the effective operation of these elements. WAY is no exception.

In order to ensure that replication sites implemented WAY as opposed to a different program that happened to incorporate the same or related core elements, more specific materials and curricula were necessary to ensure uniformity and quality across replication sites. Thus, sponsoring agencies should provide maximum specificity at the outset, with required/ suggested topics to be covered and pre-selected curricula known to be appropriate and effective with the program population in order to achieve greater uniformity and higher quality programming.[4] A program manual should also cover a range of items relevant to the practical implementation of the program. These include job descriptions, data collection forms, sample letters to participants and parents, and reporting formats. In addition, specificity in the RFP concerning all aspects of the program model might allow replication sites to make more informed decisions regarding their ability and interest in implementing the model under consideration.

- Guard Against Program Vulnerability: Don't Make the Program Too Small

Youth employment programs for high-risk youth will always require an array of supports. The needs of such young people are immense, and such programs function best when they are well integrated with related program offerings and agency resources. The replication sites that functioned the most efficiently and provided the highest quality services were able to do so in part because they could draw on the expertise of the staff in the agency beyond those within the WAY program. Thus, it is recommended that agencies implementing such programs ensure that program staff become an integral part of the agency and have access to its resources, including space, curricula, work sites, and staff time and

[4] A WAY replication manual has now been developed for future replication sites (The Children's Village, 2000).

expertise. A thorough examination of the needs of the youth employment program by the replication site well in advance of program start-up would allow the agency to develop a viable action plan which could include ways to create linkages with other staff and resources within the agency.

- Anticipate That the Complex Needs of High-Risk Youth Will Extend Beyond the Specific Scope of Any Program

Youth recruited into the four replication sites of WAY were out-of-school or at high risk for dropping out. Not surprisingly, school status was only one symptom of a larger set of personal, family, and community problems most of these young men and women faced before and after joining WAY. This experience is consistent with the reality of poor children across the country. As Levy and Shepardson noted, "Millions of America's children and families face a combination of circumstances that not only threaten their immediate well-being, but put them at risk of long-term disadvantage" (1992, 44).

For many of the teens enrolled in the WAY replication sites, participation in the program was compromised by their need to attend to other, more basic needs, such as having a safe place to live or enough food to eat. Worrying about sick or abusive parents and taking care of younger brothers and sisters competed for their time and attention. The needs of these youth extended well beyond the scope of services typically provided by a youth employment program. The many needs of teens for educational, medical, social, and psychological services placed a heavy burden on program staff, even where the original single-counselor model had been supplemented with other professionals.

Serving high-risk youth means needing to provide comprehensive services, regardless of the specific focus of any program (such as youth employment or juvenile justice). Youth have complex needs that cut across arbitrary funding and programmatic boundaries. As was the case with WAY replication, youth targeted for an employment program brought with them a range of health, mental health, and material needs that could not be ignored by program staff. Programs that choose to recruit extremely troubled youth need to create linkages to community social services and mental health providers or expand program staffing to provide such services without taxing core program staff.

Recommendations for Funding Agencies Supporting Replication Efforts

Government and private entities that support and encourage program replications should consider the following recommendations, covering (1) size prerequisites, (2) start-up time requirements, (3) realistic and long-term outcome expectations, and (4) the need to facilitate on-going funding.

- Programs Must be Large Enough to Resist Collapse When Staff Turnover Occurs

If programs are small, as many pilots or early replications are, they are vulnerable to collapse when key staff leaves. There needs to be sufficient redundancy in tasks and client relationships to hold the program together should turnover occur and to prevent losing staff through burn out. In the WAY replications, two sites, with double the staff and staff supports, rather than four with skeleton staffs, would have been a stronger model. However, that was not an option because the Department of Labor required grantees to work with at least four replication sites.

The situation was further complicated by the fact that the original DOL call for proposals was for $1.4 million for *one year* for the combined four sites. Because the WAY model is a multi-year intervention and given DOL's growing recognition of the need for long-term program interventions, DOL agreed to allocate the $1.4 million in funds over four years. However, given the total amount of the grant and the multi-year nature of the program, each program could serve no more than 20 youth. This resulted in each replication site having a very small complement of staff (a WAY counselor, a part-time facilitator, and a few part-time tutors for approximately 20 youth).

There were several consequences of this staffing pattern. First, if the counselor left the program, there was no continuity for youth. In this context, counselor turnover represented a complete loss of the existing

program from the youth's perspective. Second, time spent recruiting and orienting new staff and helping teens begin to trust new counselors was time taken away from services for the youth. Larger programs serving more youth and run by a team of staff would be less affected by the turnover of any single staff person. For WAY, at least two full-time counselors and a job developer/work site manager would allow each youth to develop relationships with more than one adult. More staff (and perhaps more youth) would also increase the importance of the program within the organizational structure of the replication agency.

Thus, we recommend that youth employment programs be of sufficient size (participants and staff) as to avoid reliance on a single staff person or very small number of staff. The effects of staff turnover should be mitigated by promoting a sense of belonging to the program that includes the individual counselor but extends beyond exclusive reliance on any one person. We also recommend that staff in youth employment programs that work intensively with severely troubled and needy youth have small caseloads. Additional positions should be designated to separate administrative roles and responsibilities from counseling responsibilities. Finally, counselors should receive clinical supervision in their work to provide emotional support and avoid job burn out from working with such a troubled population.

- Allow for Extended Start-Up Time

Recruitment of the hardest-to-reach youth in community-based replications takes time. If programs are rushed by overly ambitious start-up timelines, the unintended consequence is that less high-risk youth are likely to be enrolled. The most alienated kids are the most difficult to engage in any program. In the case of the WAY replications, there was contractual pressure to identify and recruit potential candidates quickly. Enrollees also had to complete application forms, have a personal interview with project staff and, once accepted, sign a contract. (It was particularly hard to obtain parental signatures for many of the youth who wanted to join). Because of the RFP expectations, the replication sites were overly optimistic about their access to out-of-school youth and

underestimated the time that would be needed to identify and interest them in the program, and arrange for appointments and interviews.

Publicly-funded replications of programs involving high-risk youth should provide longer start-up time frames for participant engagement as well as for the sponsoring agency to invite replication sites, for sites to consider the offer, and for the sites to plan and initiate implementation. Decisions made to conform to short-term expectations of "deliverables" at program inception can dramatically affect the program's long-term effectiveness.

- Require Meaningful Outcomes

There is an inherent contradiction between the need to demonstrate program effectiveness in a short period of time and the real life, long-term aspirations of youth employment and youth development programs. No program will be funded or replicated without being able to demonstrate fairly quick results. Yet, what society really wants to know is whether a particular program will succeed in transforming troubled youth into productive adults. One way to do this is by identifying and measuring short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes. If program success is measured only by short-term outcomes, one unintended consequence is to encourage "skimming," by enrolling easier-to-serve participants to ensure program success.

Youth employment programs such as WAY cannot and should not be expected to solve all the mental health, educational, and health problems of participants. Yet, ignoring those problems is likely to undermine employment goals. Homeless teens will need to find housing before they can focus on school or employment. Similarly, a young woman who is taking care of an ill parent or several younger siblings can hardly be expected to hold down a part-time job in the evenings. If youth with such complex problems are not to be excluded from youth employment programs, measures of program success will need to be incremental. At the same time, the long-term goal has to be gainful employment. Measuring progress towards that goal in terms of

laying the groundwork for success (such as finding stable housing) and measuring school achievement, criminal conduct, involvement in learning work ethics and related skills must be seen as steps along the way.

There is growing evidence that programs with high-risk youth take time—a long time—to demonstrate success. Funders need to be willing to stick with programs over the long term if short and intermediate objectives are met. Then, and only then, can real program effectiveness be established.

It is also important not to confuse program implementation measures (such as number of workshops offered or attended) with outcomes. In addition to measuring short- and long-term outcomes, replication sites should be encouraged to develop meaningful and useful measures of program implementation. Are the core elements of the program in place? Are appropriate youth enrolled in the program? Are the youth receiving the identified services? Local program replicators as well as sponsoring agencies need to assess program implementation in an ongoing and collaborative fashion to identify implementation problems before they undermine the integrity of the program.

- Facilitate Access to Ongoing Program Funding

Expectations for ongoing funding of youth employment programs from other sources, beyond the sponsoring funders are overly ambitious. As the findings of others show, even successful replication projects have no guarantee of continuing. The gap between successful outcomes and funding opportunities is large and defies logic. For WAY, this difficulty has been compounded by the need to fit a long-term program in a market that values short-term solutions and the fact that many funders want to support new programs, not pre-existing ones, no matter how successful. Thus, it is recommended that the Department of Labor and other federal and private entities recognize the limitations of local programs to raise external funds for ongoing program support. Successful models, based on well-developed outcomes, need general support for further development allowing for long-term outcomes to be measured, and to promote program replication.

Summary

The Work Appreciation for Youth (WAY) program was developed at The Children's Village in 1984 to help at-risk youth stay in school and learn the skills and attitudes necessary for getting and keeping a job. Replication of the WAY program in four community-based organizations from 1994 to 1997 along with subsequent replications in a range of settings, led to the development of a series of lessons learned and recommendations for future replications of youth employment programs. Lessons learned from the replication of this program can be used as a guide for future replications of WAY and other successful youth programs.

These findings highlight the fact that identifying successful program models and promoting replications of those models is only part of the challenge. Successful replications require careful consideration of several key issues by the replicating site, the sponsoring agency, and the funding agency. Regardless of the success of the original program, the transfer to new and different settings takes expertise and time. Our work suggests that, at a minimum, funding agencies need to ensure that the program is not too small or too isolated and thus vulnerable to collapse from staff turnover, and that adequate time is built in for program start-up. Sponsoring agencies need to develop a clear replication strategy and detailed program materials in order to promote consistency and high quality programming. Sponsoring agencies must ensure that each replication site is an appropriate "home" for the program with a compatible organizational philosophy and sufficient commitment to the program within the agency.

In addition to these general replication concerns, agencies replicating youth employment programs in particular must consider several specific implementation issues, including providing staff with organizational resources and supervision, and helping youth develop an attachment to the program beyond a relationship with a single staff person. When these steps are taken, the likelihood that a local program can be brought to scale is increased. Through the successful replication of effective local youth employment programs, this nation's at-risk youth will have a better chance to improve their life course.

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